

Name \_\_\_\_\_

English 10A - Article of the Week #1: Demonstrate active reading by marking up the article.  
Answer the questions at the end of the article. Be prepared to discuss the topic with classmates.

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## Our View: Education should trump a couple days of tourism

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It's time for those three dreaded words -- "back to school." A signal our summer is coming to an end and we'll soon be taxed with buying all those back to school supplies.

Now imagine hearing those words a little earlier next year. It could happen under a bill in the Michigan House. And while many of us dread the end of our summer, it's a plan we believe should get a passing grade.

Currently, since the 2006-07 school year, law has prohibited public schools from holding classes before Labor Day. But HB 4844 would change that, allowing schools to start their academic year before the Labor Day holiday if they chose to do so. If districts opted for the pre-Labor Day start, they would be required to be closed for the Friday before Labor Day, giving families a four-day weekend.

Michigan is one of just three states that have a law prohibiting a pre-Labor Day start. The law, signed by former Gov. Jennifer Granholm in 2005, was intended to help extend the state's summer tourism season a couple extra days. And we get it, we live and breathe on our tourism industry. But we have to wonder, is a couple days going to make or break tourism-tied businesses? Or will it help our schools and students, thus ultimately helping to grow our economy?

That's the idea behind State Rep. Andy Schor's bill. Schor said he believes supporting education and giving students the skills to be successful is one of the most important steps we can take toward moving Michigan forward in both education and economy.

"My bill will give our school administrators greater flexibility to decide what start date best serves the educational needs of their students. Local educators know best what works for their students, and if being in school prior to Labor Day is a better option in some schools then they should have that option. I believe that my bill strikes a good balance that will let kids be in school yet also lets families fully enjoy the Labor Day holiday by not holding classes on the Friday before," Schor said.

Parents will tell you, the older the children get, the harder it is to take a late summer vacation.

Usually by the first or second week of August, high school students are immersed in athletics, band and other school activities which prohibit families from getting away. And college students often start classes before Labor Day, or if not, they are often moving into dorms and apartments and having orientations before the holiday.

Also, if schools start their academic year prior to Labor Day, it could allow districts to schedule the beginning of their second semester to start when students return from Christmas break instead of mid-January. That would provide a more logical transition for students and staff, and also give schools more leeway when it comes to making up potential snow days.

There's also the angle of testing. While the bill wouldn't necessarily add more days to the school calendars, it would give teachers a little extra time in getting students caught up after summer learning setbacks, thus helping students when it comes time to take those pesky Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) and Michigan Merit Exam (MME) tests in the fall.

During the 2012-13 school year, there were six Michigan school districts that received waivers from the state's current mandate to start school after Labor Day.

And statewide, there are 33 districts or charter schools that already offer year-round classes. According to the Detroit News, the Michigan Department of Education predicts that number to increase over the next two years, judging by interest expressed from districts.

Opponents of HB 4844 argue starting school before Labor Day will cost the region jobs. That we'll also see decreases in revenue from gas, sales and income taxes.

And while we won't argue about the importance of business, we see the bill as a way to allow school districts to do what they feel is right for their students, while also striking a good balance with Michigan's tourism industry.

After all, when it comes to education, shouldn't the students come first?

*'Our View' represents the opinion of the News-Review editorial board: Ryan Bentley, Zac Britton, Rachel Brougham, Doug Caldwell, Brandon Hubbard, Jeremy McBain and Babette Stenuis Stolz.*

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What is the authors' purpose?

Who is the intended audience?